

Activity: Iowa's Natural Areas

Overview:

Students use the Internet and local resources to research natural resources in their area.

Associated Objectives:

- ☐ Students will be introduced to the basic types of natural areas found in Iowa.
- ☐ Students will be introduced to different values associated with natural resources.
- ☐ Students will be acquainted with ways humans interact with natural resources including individual responsibility toward natural resources.

Time:

Two 30 – 60 minute sessions with time for research

Materials:

Writing materials, access to Internet, contact information for local professionals in natural resources

Directions:

Have students research natural areas in your county, region of the state, etc. Find out: What types of facilities do they have? What unique features do they contain? What sort of wildlife do they support? Why were these areas set aside? How were they purchased/obtained? What outdoor activities can you do there? What kinds of natural resources used to be in your area? Are additional natural resources being protected in your area? Possible resources include county conservation boards, state parks, DNR conservation officers, and web sites. Encourage participants to share their perspective on the value of natural resources in your area, in Iowa, and worldwide. Discuss the different values – economic, ecological, aesthetic, cultural. Discuss human interactions – positive and negative – with natural resources. How do human values affect how they interact with natural areas?

Ask students:

What if Iowa no longer had any prairies, woodlands, streams, or lakes?

What would this mean for: Other animals? Businesses? Your family?

How do natural resources benefit your life?

Refer to the “Iowa Habitats” section of the *Background Information* for more information about our natural resources and the benefits they provide. Share with students any information they don’t garner through their survey and discussion. Option: Have students do a survey asking other teachers, their parents, and siblings these questions and bring them to class to share.

Evaluation:

Students will present information about natural resources in your area and be able to discuss human interactions with and values of natural resources.

Extensions:

Select a public natural area near you. Learn more about its history, unique features, and importance to the local area. Find out if there are actions you can take to help maintain or improve the area.

Internet Resources:

[Iowa DNR](#)

[Iowa State University mapping web site](#)

[United States Geological Survey mapping website](#)

[Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation “Explore Iowa”](#)

[The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Chapter](#)

[Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards](#)

[National Wildlife Refuge System](#)